

C. C. GOODWIN, Editor
J. T. GOODWIN, Manager
L. S. GILLHAM, Business Manager

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Human Hands

SIR Frederick Trevis, in the Nineteenth Century, has a very interesting article on the theme of "Are We Losing the Use of Our Hands?" He declares that the man of today is inferior in certain points to the savage who made the flint implements. He thinks that machinery is encroaching more and more upon the natural reserve force in man, and that man is relying so much upon artificial help that he is not bringing out everything that is in himself.

And we suspect that is true; in fact, we know it is. He points to the perfection of the sewing machine and shows how in making gloves that has encroached so much that there is no one who can make gloves as perfectly as they were made before that was invented.

There is one point, however, that he leaves out. How about the man's hands who invented the sewing machine and made the patterns for the first electric motor and who created all the splendid machinery? We suspect that his answer would be: "There are individuals who have absolutely perfect use of their hands, but they are growing less and less, because machinery is usurping so many of the functions that formerly were relied upon simply by the work of the hand."

And that is true, and we do not see how it can be changed. There is an advantage about it, however. Colonel Roosevelt last month spent a week or two in Egypt and if he saw any of the hands that did the work there in the long ago they were merely mummy hands. But if he could have run across a steam engine or an electric motor or a genuine hoist, such as might have lifted the blocks into place in the pyramids, those things would have interested him more than mummies, because the hands of men only work a little while at best and then lose their hold.

American Literature

MR. George F. Parker lectured before the Literary Society of the Washington and Lee University at Lexington, Va., recently, his theme being "America's Literary Needs."

He said we made a real start about 1820 in Washington Irving in sketch and history. James Fenimore Cooper in the novel and Daniel Webster through whom the fourth orator was added to the world's list. He noted failures and successes in historical fields, but finds nothing real and enduring in biography, other than the patient and pathetic record written on Mt. McGregor. He declared that the real Lincoln is buried under a ten-volume book; that there is no true history of Seward, Stanton, Johnson, Stevens, McClellan and Sumner; that fiction has more sorely degenerated during the past twenty-five years than anything else, except poetry; that literary people are much to blame in not setting a higher pace, and asks what we know of John Adams, Hamilton, Washington and John Marshall, or Emerson, Prescott, Motley, Hawthorne, Lowell, Whittier, and if we do not

lean more readily to the pathetic madness of Poe.

From the meagre synopsis of Mr. Parker's lecture, we do not know that we have caught his real meaning, whether it is want of accuracy in history, or the absence of the needed intuitive knowledge, to be able from a statement of facts to, from those facts, trace out and put in proper language such a biographical sketch as will portray the real character of the man treated of, or lack of dramatic portrayal in fiction, or all these combined, but it seems to us it is easy to see why there are so many unsatisfactory publications. The first thing is the absence of overshadowing talents. The world waited long. At length Shakespeare came, and out of his brain he made pictures which are now accepted as real history and biography. We can find the names of the men he portrayed in history, but the impressions of them, in our minds, are the ones Shakespeare made. It is so of Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Cleopatra, Macbeth and many more, while his fictitious characters are just as vivid, Julia, Portia, Rosalind, Romeo and the others all move before us instinct with life and grace.

What has caused thousands of people to visit Scotland? Would they have ever gone there, except for Scott and Burns?

It is hard to find anything to portray in our country, because thousands of people are yet alive who helped subdue the frontier and drive back barbarism, and romance has little field, following their path. Then partisan prejudices stand forever in the way. Suppose the real life of John Adams could be presented? How would it read to an educated man whose idea of greatness centers in Jefferson? And is not the one thought that dominates all others in reading what Grant wrote on Mt. McGregor, that while the author was writing with his right hand, in order to make an inheritance for wife and children, with his left hand he was holding shut the door, at which Death was impatiently knocking? As to Lincoln, it may be five hundred years before his full character can be set to words; before the writer can find why, when unknown to fame and in some ways the scorn of the leaders of American scholarship, there was something about him that caused the people to demand that the presidency of the republic should be given him.

Then most authors are poor, and write, if they can, what publishers will accept. Then who are the men and women who pass upon what shall and shall not be published? In many cases a point in syntax is more to them than would be "the organ roll of Homer's verse." Then many of them are educated fools and think vastly more of the frame of a picture than of the picture itself. Many of the works most esteemed by cultivated readers were rejected by publishers; who knows of those that never saw the light?

But Mr. Parker should remember how old the world is, and how few are the books that interest the world's bright minds, and then have hope. He, too, should not forget that this is a metallic age, that the struggle now is for money and to be able to make ostentatious displays. An oil well would outsell the very fountain of knowledge.

The Proposed Park System

IT is to be hoped that the council will take a broad view of the petition of the Commercial club, asking that some one with an acquired reputation as a landscape gardener and architect will be employed to outline a park system for this city. If such a man is here, all right, engage him, but there should be kept in mind the fact that the man should have the nature, the education and the experience needed, in order that no mistake may be made. The fee paid such a man will be a good investment, for every dollar thus paid will save many dollars in undoing unsatisfactory work or in correcting mistakes. Again the plans



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